

Ethics, Values and the Professional Self

Sports Psychology

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Lecture Outline

- Evaluate issues of equity, justice, and fairness in sports psychology practice.
- Apply ethical principles to real-world sport settings.
- Reflect on advocacy roles psychologists play in promoting inclusion and wellbeing in sport.
- Demonstrate ethical reasoning in complex team and individual contexts.



Foundations of Ethical Behaviour

Justice

Fair, equitable, and appropriate treatment of **all individuals**

Distributive and procedural justice

Fair allocation of resources such as psychological support (distributive) and executing fairness in making decision (procedural)

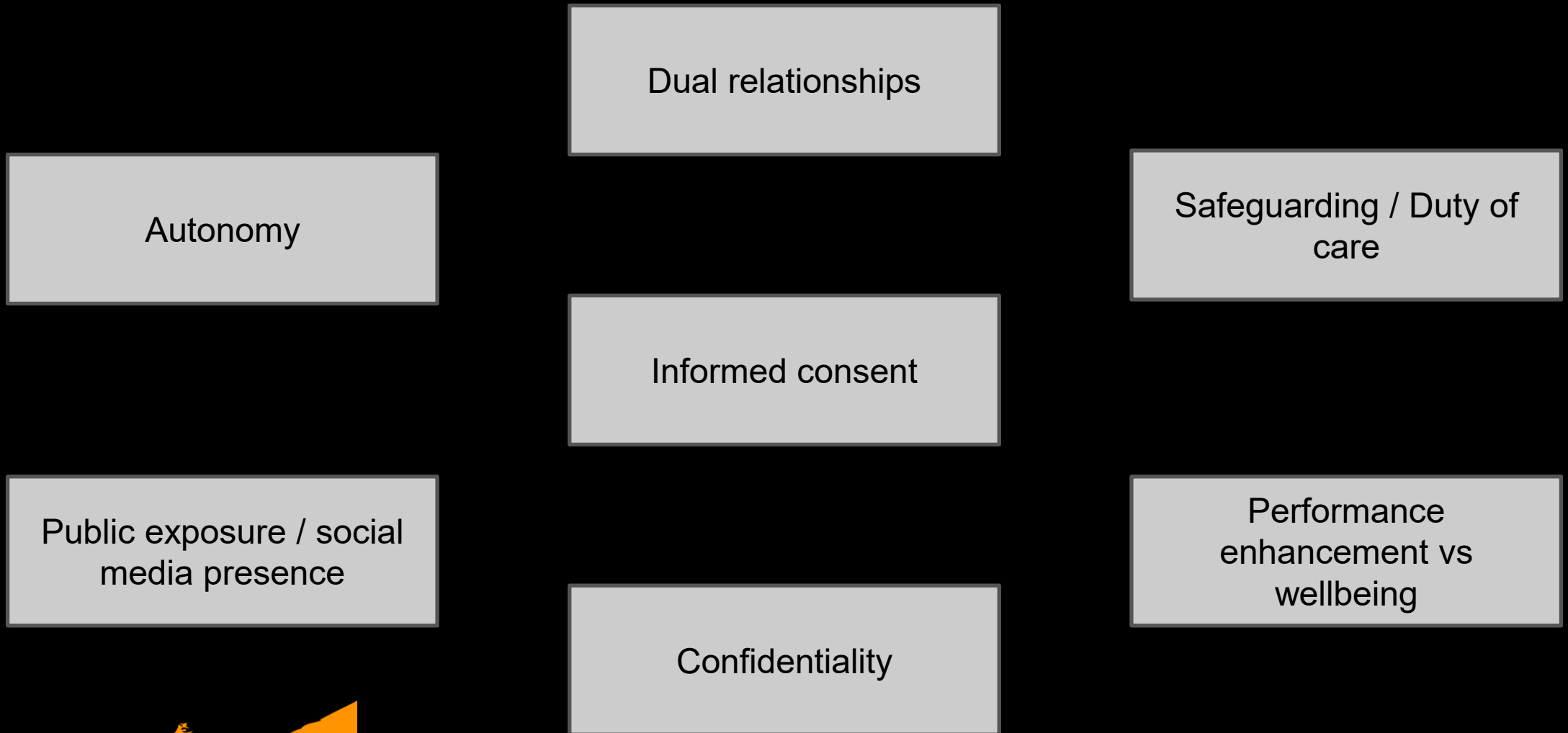
Respect

Acknowledging diversity and rights of sports persons

**In what situation
might a sport
psychologist be
required to consider
ethics?**



Ethical Challenges in Sports



Positive Ethics

Proactively striving for ethical excellence rather than merely avoiding misconduct

Reactive Positive Ethics

Responding to problems **after they occur**

Sense of damage control



Proactive Positive Ethics

Anticipating ethical challenges beforehand

Involves reflective practice and ethical foresight

In what situation
might a sport
psychologist act
proactively to
prevent an ethical
issue?





**Establish
boundaries**

**Promote athlete
wellbeing over
performance**

**Engage in
regular
supervision and
peer consultation**

**Record ethical
considerations
when working
with sports
persons**

**Educate relevant
stakeholders**

**Engage in the
use of ethical
decision-making
models**

**Stay updated on legal and ethical
guidelines**





Ethical Principles Visualised in Sports Settings

Ethical Principles Visualised in Sports Settings

COMPETENCE

JUSTICE

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPECT

INTEGRITY

Supporting trans athletes
facing discrimination

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Supporting trans athletes facing
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Advocating for equal funding
for women's teams

Ethical Principles Visualised in Sports Settings

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Avoiding manipulation of
performance data for
selection purposes

Ethical Principles Visualised in Sports Settings

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Avoiding manipulation of performance data
for selection purposes

Ethical Principles Visualised in Sports Settings

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INTEGRITY

Managing dual relationships,
maintaining boundaries

Ethical Principles Visualised in Sports Settings

COMPETENCE

JUSTICE

RESPONSIBILITY

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INTEGRITY

Managing dual relationships, maintaining boundaries

Ethical Principles Visualised in Sports Settings

COMPETENCE

JUSTICE

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPECT

INTEGRITY

Seeking supervision when
working with new
populations

Ethical Principles Visualised in Sports Settings

COMPETENCE

Seeking supervision when working with new populations

JUSTICE

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPECT

INTEGRITY



**What systemic
barriers are there
in sport?**

Systemic Barriers



Gender



Disability



Socio-economic



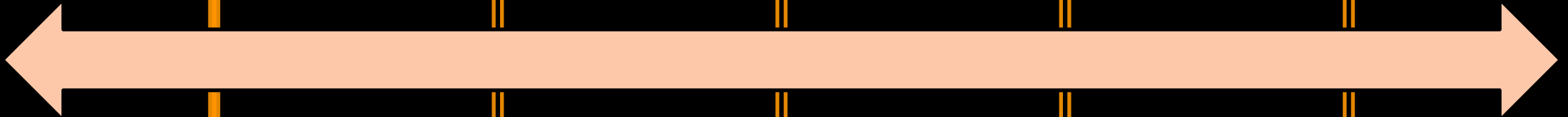
Race / Ethnicity



Sexual orientation



Age





Ethical Decision Making Models

Knapp's five-stage model



Knapp's five-stage ethical decision-making model

Principle based ethics model

Moral principle override, but should attempt to minimise harm to the offended moral principle

EXHIBIT 4.1. Incorporating Principle-Based Ethics Into the Five-Step Model

1. **Identify or scrutinize the problem.** Activities that violate or threaten to violate one of the moral principles are identified as moral concerns.
2. **Develop alternatives or hypotheses.** The alternatives should be based on or at least be consistent with general moral principles.
3. **Evaluate or analyze options.** The option chosen depends on which one strikes the optimal balance or ranking of moral principles.
4. **Act or perform the best option.** Although one moral principle may be violated, efforts are taken to minimize the harm to the offended principle.
5. **Look back or evaluate the results.** The activities are evaluated according to the extent to which they fulfill, balance, or minimize harm to offended moral principles.

Applying ethical decision making

Sports Dilemmas





01

**Should sports
psychologists
prioritise team goals
over individual athlete
welfare?**

Should sports psychologists prioritise team goals over individual athlete welfare?

For Team Goals

- Sport is inherently collective – success depends on cohesion of a team
- Psychologists are employed by the organisation (not the individuals), so have a duty to consider performance outcomes
- Individual goals should align with team goals where possible

For Individual Welfare

- Ethical duty to 'do no harm' overrides performance pressures
- Wellbeing of athletes affects long-term success of the team
- Confidentiality and trust are undermined if a psychologist prioritises management interests



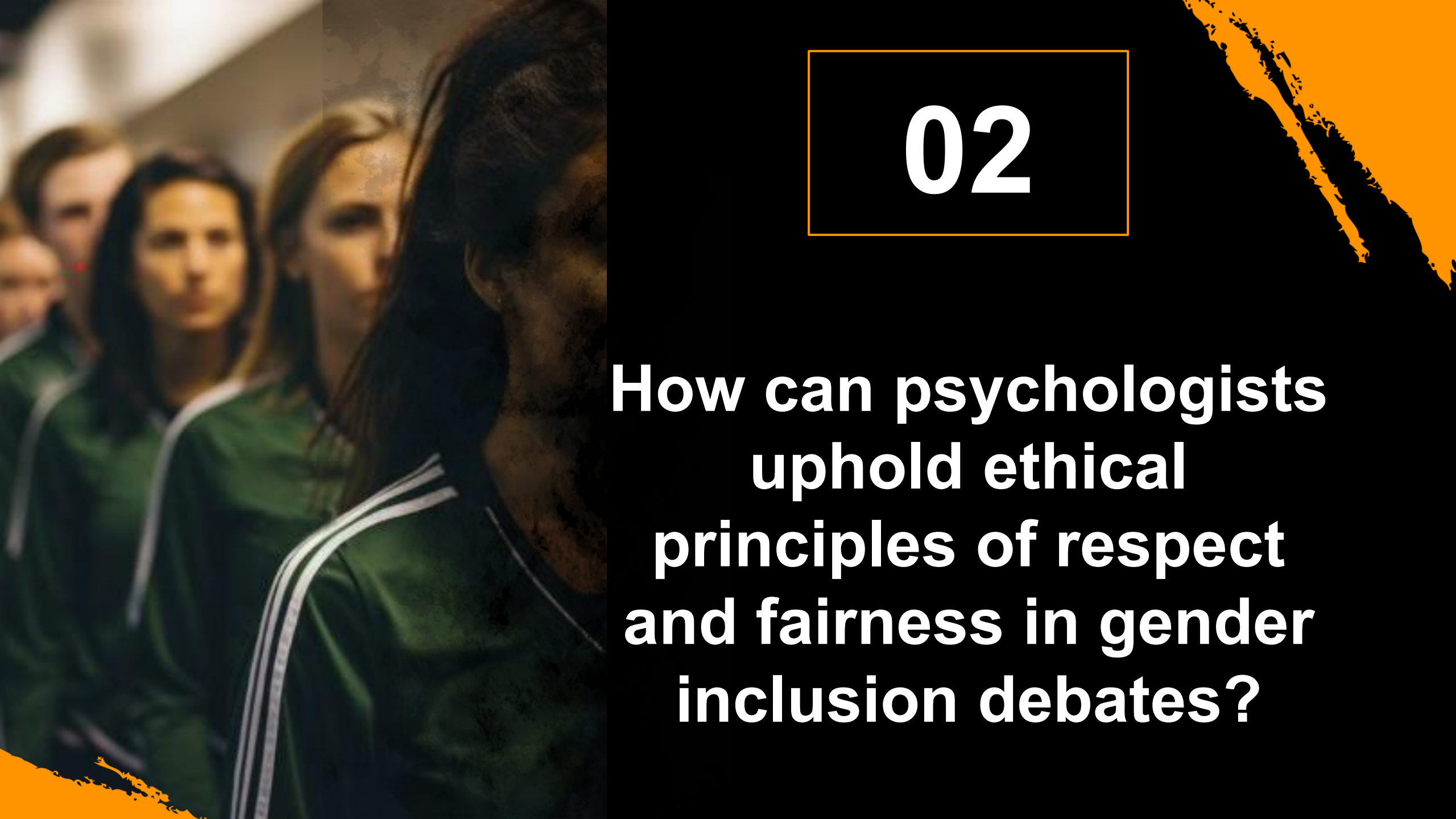
02

Case example: Transgender athletes and competition policies.

2023 – UK Athletics banned transgender women from participating in female categories of licensed, competitive events.

This was based on the principle of protecting the fairness of female competition.





02

**How can psychologists
uphold ethical
principles of respect
and fairness in gender
inclusion debates?**



03

Case example: Justin Fashanu

Career between 1978 – 1997

First openly gay male professional
footballer in the UK.

Faced severe discrimination, harassment
from the media, and isolation.

Died by suicide in 1998





03

**How can psychologists
support athletes
navigating identity
disclosure in
unsupportive
environments?**



04

Case example: Socioeconomic inequalities in motorsport

One of the most financially exclusive sports in the world

UK – entry tends to be karting. Massive financial implications, even at competitive junior levels.

‘barriers that prevent working-class kids from reaching elite racing’ – many drivers excluded due to costs and limited grassroots pathways



04

What role can sport psychologists play in widening participation for underrepresented socioeconomic groups?



Questions?